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# FARM LABOR

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## FLORIDA

The number of workers paid by farmers and agricultural services totaled 87,000 for the week of January 12 through 18. Farmers hired 70,000 workers compared with 57,000 in October 2002 and 62,000 in January 2002. Agricultural services provided 17,000 paid workers, up 12,000 from last quarter, but down 2,000 from the number supplied a year ago. Cold and mostly dry conditions persisted during the survey week with freezes and frosts occurring from northern areas through some parts of the southern Peninsula. Cattle producers fed supplemental protein and hay to animals since most pastures were dormant due to drying soils and the cold temperatures. Citrus harvesting speeded ahead with growers trying to get as much of the crop as possible before the hard freeze that occurred at the end of the survey week and on the two days following. Grove caretakers prepared irrigation systems to run around the clock and dirt banked young trees as protection from the frost, while some in more northern areas iced fruit for cold protection. Other grove work included mowing, disking and chopping of cover crops, and the pushing out of dead trees which some caretakers burned in the groves to provide some heat during the colder nights. Most central

and southern grove caretakers also applied fertilizers. Strawberry growers ran overhead sprinklers to form ice caps on plants as protection from the cold which saved some immature fruit and most plants. Floriculture and nursery producers covered some plants with blankets, iced some plants with sprinkler systems and warmed others with heaters for cold protection with some loss occurring. Vegetable harvesting continued during the survey week with growers harvesting as much as possible prior to the freezing temperatures. Other vegetable field activities included planting of late winter and early spring crop acreage and protecting plants from the cold temperatures.

The January all hired worker wage rate averaged \$8.90 per hour, twenty-one cents or about two percent higher than the October 2002 wage of \$8.69 and up ten cents or about one percent from the \$8.80 paid last year. Farmers paid an average of \$8.81 per hour, fourteen cents above the \$8.67 paid in October, but sixteen cents lower than the \$8.97 paid last year. Agricultural services paid workers an average of \$9.35 per hour, thirty-five cents above the \$9.00 paid in October and \$1.10 above the \$8.25 paid last year.

## UNITED STATES

There were 884,000 hired workers on the Nation's farms and ranches the week of January 12-18, 2003, down 1 percent from a year ago. Of these hired workers, 724,000 workers were hired directly by farm operators. Agricultural service employees on farms and ranches made up the remaining 160,000 workers.

Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$9.32 per hour during the January 2003 reference week, up 35 cents from a year earlier. Field workers received an average of \$8.29 per hour, up 4 cents from last January, while livestock workers earned \$8.91 per hour compared with \$8.20 a year earlier. The field and livestock worker combined wage rate, at \$8.50 per hour, was up 27 cents from last year. The number of hours worked averaged 37.8 hours for hired workers during the survey week compared with 38.5 hours a year ago.

The largest decreases in number of hired farm workers from a year ago were in the Southern Plains (Oklahoma and Texas), Northeast II (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania), Mountain I (Idaho, Montana and Wyoming) and Corn Belt I (Indiana, Illinois and Ohio) regions. In the Southern Plains, livestock herding activity was kept at a minimum to reduce pasture trampling and allow grasses to regrow. Unseasonably cold weather kept Christmas tree activity down, and poultry production was down, which

lessened the demand for workers in the Northeast II region. The prolonged drought in the Mountain I region kept field work needs at a minimum, and calving, lambing and shearing activities were just getting underway. In the Corn Belt I region, hired worker numbers in January 2002 were much higher than usual due to unseasonably warm weather. This year, a return to more normal weather patterns decreased the demand for hired workers.

The largest increases in number of hired farm workers over last year occurred in California, Florida, and in the Appalachian II (Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia) and Lake (Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin) regions. California's hired farm work force was up considerably due to the much warmer and drier conditions compared to the January 2002 reference week. Winter vegetable harvest was in full swing, along with field preparation for spring vegetable plantings. A major winter storm in Tennessee necessitated more livestock care and feeding in the Appalachian II region, thus increasing the need for hired workers. In the western half of the Lake region, the relative lack of snow cover led to increased herding activity on livestock operations and a higher demand for hired workers.

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**Table 1 -- Florida agricultural workers, number of workers, wage rates, and hours worked, January 12 - 18, 2003, with comparisons**

Employer, Year, and survey week		Hired Workers						
		Number of workers			Hours Worked Per Week	Wages Paid by Type of Work		
						All	Expected to work	
		150 days or more	149 days or less					
HIRED BY FARMERS								
		Thousands			Hours	Dollars Per Hour <sup>1/</sup>		
2003	January 12 - 18	70.0	56.0	14.0	37.2	8.81	7.80	8.30
2002	October 6 - 12	57.0	51.0	6.0	38.9	8.67	7.50	8.60
	July 7 - 13	43.0	38.0	5.0	37.5	8.48	7.25	7.80
	April 7 - 13	52.0	46.0	6.0	40.6	8.57	7.75	7.50
	January 6 - 12	62.0	50.0	12.0	37.2	8.97	8.15	8.55
2001	October 7 - 13	51.0	44.0	7.0	41.8	8.84	7.70	8.00
	July 8 - 14	48.0	43.0	5.0	40.8	8.65	7.50	7.65
	April 8 - 14	63.0	52.0	11.0	39.9	8.40	7.75	7.90
	January 7 - 13	55.0	47.0	8.0	37.6	8.29	7.65	7.90
HIRED BY AGRICULTURAL SERVICES								
2003	January 12 - 18	17.0			32.0	9.35		
2002	October 6 - 12	5.0			31.5	9.00		
	July 7 - 13	4.0			42.5	9.25		
	April 7 - 13	11.0			34.0	9.00		
	January 6 - 12	19.0			38.5	8.25		
2001	October 7 - 13	5.0			34.0	8.70		
	July 8 - 14	2.0			43.5	9.54		
	April 8 - 14	14.0			39.0	8.30		
	January 7 - 13	18.0			29.5	8.70		
HIRED BY BOTH FARMERS & AGRICULTURAL SERVICES								
2003	January 12 - 18	87.0				8.90		
2002	October 6 - 12	62.0				8.69		
	July 7 - 13	47.0				8.55		
	April 7 - 13	63.0				8.63		
	January 6 - 12	81.0				8.80		
2001	October 7 - 13	56.0				8.83		
	July 8 - 14	50.0				8.69		
	April 8 - 14	77.0				8.38		
	January 7 - 13	73.0				8.37		

<sup>1/</sup> Benefits, such as housing and meals, are provided some workers but the values are not included in the wage rates.

**Table 2 -- Number of workers hired by farmers, wage rates, and hours worked,  
selected States, January 12 - 18, 2003, with comparisons <sup>1/</sup>**

Item	Florida	California	Texas & Oklahoma	Arizona & New Mexico	Hawaii	United States <sup>2/</sup>
Thousands						
<b>All hired workers</b>						
<b>January 12 - 18, 2003</b>	70	230	50	22	7	724
October 6 - 12, 2002	57	*270	58	19	8	*940
<b>January 6 - 12, 2002</b>	62	186	61	18	8	707
<b>Expected to work</b>						
<b>150 days or more</b>						
<b>January 12 - 18, 2003</b>	56	190	40	20	6	609
October 6 - 12, 2002	51	*222	46	16	7	*685
<b>January 6 - 12, 2002</b>	50	145	54	16	7	584
<b>149 days or less</b>						
<b>January 12 - 18, 2003</b>	14	40	10	2	1	115
October 6 - 12, 2002	6	*48	12	3	1	*255
<b>January 6 - 12, 2002</b>	12	41	7	2	1	123
Dollars per hour <sup>3/</sup>						
<b>All hired worker wage rate</b>						
<b>January 12 - 18, 2003</b>	8.81	9.38	8.85	8.12	11.04	9.32
October 6 - 12, 2002	8.67	*9.39	7.57	8.25	11.02	*8.95
<b>January 6 - 12, 2002</b>	8.97	9.22	8.05	8.42	10.90	8.97
<b>Wages by type of worker</b>						
<b>Field &amp; Livestock</b>						
<b>January 12 - 18, 2003</b>	7.87	8.46	8.29	7.48	9.36	8.50
October 6 - 12, 2002	7.72	*8.68	7.18	7.42	9.32	*8.36
<b>January 6 - 12, 2002</b>	8.20	8.36	7.57	7.85	9.33	8.23
<b>Field</b>						
<b>January 12 - 18, 2003</b>	7.80	8.20	8.13	6.92	9.31	8.29
October 6 - 12, 2002	7.50	*8.60	7.05	7.07	9.25	*8.34
<b>January 6 - 12, 2002</b>	8.15	8.25	7.82	7.57	9.36	8.25
<b>Livestock</b>						
<b>January 12 - 18, 2003</b>	8.30	10.10	8.51	8.22	<sup>4/</sup>	8.91
October 6 - 12, 2002	8.60	*9.30	7.32	8.24	<sup>4/</sup>	*8.42
<b>January 6 - 12, 2002</b>	8.55	9.69	7.37	8.48	<sup>4/</sup>	8.20
Average hours per week						
<b>Hours worked by all hired workers</b>						
<b>January 12 - 18, 2003</b>	37.2	41.2	37.9	47.2	37.9	37.8
October 6 - 12, 2002	38.9	45.5	41.7	45.7	37.9	40.4
<b>January 6 - 12, 2002</b>	37.2	42.1	41.5	47.7	37.0	38.5

<sup>1/</sup> Excludes Agricultural Service workers.

<sup>2/</sup> United States excludes Alaska.

<sup>3/</sup> Value of any perquisites provided are not included in wage rates.

<sup>4/</sup> Insufficient data for this category; included in all hired wages.

\* Revised.

## Reliability of Farm Labor Estimates

**Survey Procedures:** These data were collected by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) during the last two weeks of January using sampling procedures to ensure every employer of agricultural workers had a chance of being selected.

Two samples of farm operators are selected. First, NASS maintains a list of farms that hire farm workers. Farms on this list are classified by size and type. Those expected to employ large numbers of workers are selected with greater frequency than those hiring few or no workers. A second sample consists of segments of land scientifically selected from an area sampling frame. Each June, highly trained interviewers locate each selected land segment and identify every farm operating land within the sample segment's boundaries. The names of farms found in these area segments are matched against the NASS list of farms; those not found on the list are included in the labor survey sample to represent all farms. This methodology is known as multiple frame sampling, with an area sample used to measure the incompleteness of the list. Additionally, a list of agricultural service firms was sampled in California and Florida. The survey reference week was January 12-18, 2003.

**Reliability:** Two types of errors, sampling and non-sampling, are always present in an estimate based on a sample survey. Both types affect the "accuracy" of the estimates. Sampling error occurs because a complete census is not taken. The sampling error measures the variation in estimates from the average of all possible samples. An estimate of 100 with a sampling error of 1 would mean that chances are 19 out of 20 that the estimates from all possible samples averaged together would be between 98 and 102; which is the survey estimate, plus or minus two times the sampling error. The sampling error expressed as a percent of the estimate is called the relative sampling error. The relative sampling error for number of hired workers at the U.S. level is normally less than 5 percent. The relative sampling error

for the number of hired workers generally ranged between 11 and 23 percent at the regional level. The U.S. all hired farm worker wage rate had a relative sampling error of 1.0 percent. The relative sampling error was 0.8 percent for the combined field and livestock worker wage rate. Relative sampling errors for the all hired farm worker wage rate

generally ranged between 2 and 6 percent at the regional levels. Relative sampling errors for wage rates published by type of farm and economic class of farm ranged between 1 and 21 percent at the regional level.

Non-sampling errors can occur in a complete census as well as in sample surveys. They are caused by the inability to obtain correct information from each operation sampled, differences in interpreting questions or definitions, and mistakes in editing, coding or processing the data. Special efforts are taken at each step of the survey to minimize non-sampling errors.

**Revision Policy:** Farm labor information is subject to revision the next time the information is published or the year after the original publication date. The basis for revision must be supported by additional data that directly affect the level of the estimate. Worker numbers and wage rates for January 2002 and October 2002 were subject to revision with this report. Revisions were made and previous data are reprinted in this report for your information.

**Next Farm Labor Publication Date:** The May 16th report will have information for the survey week of April 6-12, 2003. The report will include the number of All Hired Workers, Average Hours Worked by Hired Workers and the All Hired Worker Wage Rates at the regional and U.S. levels. The wage rate for field, livestock, and combined field and livestock workers will also be available at the regional and U.S. level. The number of Agricultural Service Workers and the corresponding wage rates will be published for California and Florida.

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Hired farm worker wage rates were generally above a year ago in most regions. The largest increases occurred in the Northeast II, Northern Plains (Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota), Southern Plains and Southeast (Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina) regions. The higher wages in the Northeast II and Southeast regions were mainly due to a higher percentage of nursery and greenhouse workers in the work force. Wages in the Northern and Southern Plains were higher due to fewer seasonal workers on the payroll.